

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Note: Instructions to DNRC staff for preparing this EA can be found at:
http://www.dnrc.state.mt.us/eis_ea.html

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. *Applicant/Contact name and address:* Sky Ranch Addition
2239 Lower Valley Road
Kalispell, MT 59901
2. *Type of action:* Provisional Permit to Appropriate Water 76LJ 30024283
3. *Water source name:* Groundwater Well
4. *Location affected by action:* SE NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 7, Township 27N, Range 20W, Flathead Co.
5. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:*
The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311, MCA are met. The applicant is seeking a water use permit to use one deep well for multiple domestic in an approved Flathead County Subdivision named Sky Ranch Addition. Sky Ranch Addition Subdivision is located in the E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 7, Township 27N, Range 20W, Flathead County. Water to supply the subdivision will come from one deep well, The well is drilled to 640 feet deep. The scope of this EA will focus mainly on the water use from the well to identify impacts, if any, from this requested action. Environmental review information as well as identified impacts for the overall subdivision can be found in the Sky Ranch Addition file located at the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office. Within the subdivision water will be used to irrigate 32.4 acres and also serve a total of 5 homes. The water use permit is a critical element to the success of the subdivision and is of great benefit to the appropriator.
6. *Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:*
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)

Montana Historical Society
Montana Natural Heritage Program

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity - Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.

Determination: Not applicable to groundwater.

Water quality - Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.

Determination: Not applicable to groundwater.

Groundwater - Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.

Determination: No surface water flows will be impacted from this appropriation from the deep aquifer underlying the Flathead Valley. The well was completed in accordance with the rules of the Board of Water Well Contractors and grouted to 60 feet below ground surface to maintain water quality. Pump testing the wells found adequate water to supply the needs of the subdivision.

DIVERSION WORKS - Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.

Determination: A 65-gallon per minute Goulds pump is installed in the well. There will be no impact to the above-specified items.

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species - Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or "species of special concern."

Determination: The site is located within a mixed Agricultural/Residential area and is mapped within the black bear spring and fall ranges. The Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office has stated large and potentially dangerous animals frequent the site and prospective owners of these lots should be made aware of this situation. It is recommended lot owners contact the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks to obtain information on living with wild animals. The water use permit is basically part of an already approved subdivision and will not create further impacts than those identified by Flathead County.

Wetlands - Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.

Determination: Each of the five residential lots include a portion of an existing depressional wetland common to the lower valley. The slough is a former channel of the Flathead River. The geology of this area consists of post glacial deltaic sediments. Grain-size analyses indicate the sediments vary from well sorted fine sand to silty clay. A shallow water-table aquifer, informally recognized as the Deltaic Sand Aquifer is present throughout the lower valley. The depth to groundwater ranges from 2 to 16 feet below ground surface depending upon location and time of year. These type of isolated sloughs in the lower valley are a manifestation of the water table (i.e., window on the aquifer). All ground disturbing construction activities are limited to the higher ground on each lot adjacent to the slough. Portions of the wetland slowly dry during the summer months and may actually be dry during some seasons.

Ponds - *For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.*

Determination: This project does not involve ponds.

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE - *Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.*

Determination: The property is an agricultural tract. It is moderately flat and has suitable building sites. Problems with saline seep are not evident. Development of the lots within the subdivision will require some excavation but impact on the soil stability and moisture is minimal.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS - *Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.*

Determination: The lot owners are responsible for re-vegetation and the control and eradication of noxious weeds on their lots. The developer shall be responsible to do so until ownership is transferred on lots.

AIR QUALITY - *Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.*

Determination: The impact to air quality as a result of this subdivision is anticipated to be minimal.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project.*

Determination: A cultural resources survey is up to the property owner since it is private property. The land has been previously cultivated.

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY - *Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.*

Determination: None

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS - Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.

Determination: The development is in an area that is currently not zoned. The project is in compliance with Flathead County Subdivision Regulations.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES - Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

Determination: There will be no impact to the quality of recreation or wilderness activities nor will access be denied to any established recreation areas.

HUMAN HEALTH - Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.

Determination: This development does not impact human health.

PRIVATE PROPERTY - Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.

Yes___ No_X_. If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.

Determination: N/A

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.

Impacts on:

- (a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? No
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? Yes
- (c) Existing land uses? Yes
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? No
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? Yes
- (f) Demands for government services? No
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? No
- (h) Utilities? Yes
- (i) Transportation? No

(j) Safety? No

(k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? No

2. ***Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:*** Indirect impacts such as increased traffic have been addressed in the preliminary plat approval. Human population for this area of the valley will increase and may at sometime in the future impact the groundwater supply but because of a continuous recharge to the source and the vastness of the deep artesian aquifer it is not anticipated anytime in the near future.
3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** Water availability has been shown to be available without impact to surrounding water users in the amounts specified in the application. To meet the beneficial use criteria it is deemed necessary to put a totalizing meter on the water system to assure the volume isn't exceeded causing adverse affect to senior water users. This condition stems from the amount specified in the application being less than the duty of water needed to accomplish the desired irrigation of 27.4 acres of hay ground.
4. ***Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:*** There is no reasonable alternative to this proposed water supply and no action would disable the development of the subdivision.

PART III. Conclusion

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? No

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action: No significant impacts have been identified, therefore no EIS is required.

Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Rich Russell

Title: Water Resources Specialist

Date: October 19, 2006